

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

F A C T S H E E T

**APPROVAL OF REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENT FOR
START TAKING ACTION RESPONSIBLY TODAY (START) PROGRAM
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2002-2003
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS)**

REQUEST:

Request approval for an Appropriation Adjustment in the amount of \$1,008,000 for Fiscal Year 2002-2003. The Appropriation Adjustment is fully funded with prior year Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) – State General Funds (SGF) and Federal Financial Participation (FFP) Medi-Cal revenue, and will provide spending authority for the multi-disciplinary teams for the Start Taking Action Responsibly Today (START) program.

CONTRACTOR:

The START Program is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary delinquency prevention program for the County's most at-risk foster care children. The program is a collaborative effort involving the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Probation Department, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the Los Angeles Unified School District, with the Department of Mental Health as the lead agency. Initiated at the direction of the Children's Commission 300/600 Task Force, START is now located in three sites, including Pasadena, Metro/Wilshire, and Torrance, with a fourth location in Santa Clarita expected to be operational within the next fiscal year.

Services are available based upon medical necessity, requiring a mental health diagnosis that results in an impaired level of functioning. START is a voluntary program. Only youth who agree to participate in the program are eligible for START services.

The program is generally six to nine months in duration and includes a comprehensive, multi-agency assessment, the establishment of individualized service goals, and the provision of intensive mental health and case management services by members of the START team. Each START team includes a Children's Services Worker, a Probation Officer, a Psychologist, and an Educator. START Children's Services Workers from DCFS assume primary case carrying responsibility for youth during their program participation, and carry a reduced caseload, allowing for more intensive supervision of program participants.

INTENT:

Approval for the above action is requested to increase the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) appropriation to allow for reimbursement to DCFS for their staff's participation on the START Teams.

JUSTIFICATION:

The START Program was implemented in response to recommendations of the Children's Commission 300/600 Task Force convened by the Board of Supervisors to address the growing concern regarding youth who are dependents of the juvenile court pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 300 et seq. and who exhibit pre-delinquent and/or delinquent behaviors.

Overarching goals for START youth include: a) the prevention of delinquent and antisocial behavior; b) stabilization of placement in the least restrictive setting, preferably with a long-term caretaker; c) improvement in school attendance and performance; and d) preparation for life as a productive adult.

Currently, the START budget includes EPSDT funding for DMH and Probation staff only. Beginning this fiscal year, DMH has identified a mechanism to reimburse DCFS START program costs with EPSDT and FFP Medi-Cal revenue. While DMH has been negotiating with DCFS, changes in program and administrative management led to a series of extensive delays in providing the required funding appropriation increase.

CONTRACTING PROCESS:

This subject does not apply.